The Antibourgeois Character of National Socialism

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In his autobiographical *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, John Lukacs explains why he came to appreciate certain bourgeois virtues, such as "solidity, reliability, probity, decency, modesty . . . and, most of all, the cult of privacy." This, Lukacs tells the reader, was due to "the fact that, even more than the Marxists, the Nazis and the extreme nationalists hated everyone and everything that was bourgeois, *bürgerlich*."[1] In his *The Last European War*, Lukacs argued that the defeat of France in 1940 signified above all "the defeat of bourgeois Europe, the collapse of the European bourgeoisie, the end of the Bourgeois Age in the history of the World."[2]

The antibourgeois component of National Socialism recognized by Lukacs has received surprisingly little consideration in historical research, given that antagonism toward bourgeois values was a central element in National Socialist self-presentation and propaganda in the years before 1932 and then again in the first phase of the Nazi seizure of power in the winter and early spring of 1933. Though virtually suspended during the long phase of the regime's success and acceptance between the summer of 1933 and early 1943, when the creation of a "national community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*) was foremost on the political agenda, public expressions by the regime disparaging the bourgeoisie reemerged in the last phase of the war. This antibourgeois thrust of Nazism appears paradoxical, since it was directed against core voting groups of the National Socialist Party (NSDAP): a significant part of the petty bourgeoisie (*Mittelstand*) and, beginning in the spring of 1932, large segments of the haute bourgeoisie. In his electoral analysis of Germany's larger cities, Richard Hamilton demonstrated, for example, that inhabitants of the *Villenvororte*, the more affluent suburbs of large German cities from Berlin to Hamburg and Munich to Mannheim, voted in disproportionate numbers for the NSDAP. Apart from factory owners and businessmen, the *Villenvororte* were made up largely of members of the educated middle classes, professionals, and various categories of higher civil servants employed by the Reich, the fed-

[1] John Lukacs, *Confessions of an Original Sinner* (South Bend, IN, 2000), 34–35.
[2] John Lukacs, *The Last European War: September 1939–December 1941* (New Haven, CT, 2001), 201.

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eral states, and municipalities.[3] Their bourgeois identity was strongly developed, making it appear paradoxical that they voted for a party that (as will be shown below) took violent exception to what were seen as bourgeois values, lifestyles, and behaviors. It was not the *Bürgertum* as a socioeconomic category that the Nazis mainly opposed; they ranted instead against its cultural attributes, especially the impact of bourgeois values and behavior on German society and politics. In particular, they railed against a class-ridden educational system, the exclusion of the working classes from the political mainstream—and, most damning of all from the Nazi standpoint—the alleged lack of moral fiber, toughness, and fighting spirit that were called for if the nation were to survive and thrive in a world full of enemies.

Despite the intensity of Nazi antibourgeois attacks leading up to 1933, we have no comprehensive analysis of the Nazi movement's opposition to the bourgeoisie. Only a handful of works touch upon the issue: Hitler's personal antibourgeois stand has been examined in commendable detail by Rainer Zitelmann and commented upon by John Lukacs and Henry Turner.[4] David Schoenbaum referred to Nazism's antibourgeois slant in connection with its social-revolutionary drive; Joachim Fest pointed to it in some of his essays; and Fritz Stern and George Mosse mentioned the subject in their classic studies on the intellectual origins of National Socialism.[5] Like the Nazis decades later, the cultural critics of Stern's study—Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, and Arthur Moeller van den Bruck—objected to the cultural characteristics of the bourgeoisie: they denounced the stultifying philistinism of the bourgeoisie, its self-satisfied materialism, and its "style of life and state of mind" in conjunction with its "impaired vitality." The Nazis' contemporary political opponents were fully conscious of the antibourgeois character of National Socialism. In 1933, for example, Thomas Mann, taking issue with Nazism's antibourgeois diatribes, recognized that these constituted an essential element of the movement's ideology,[6] and the Social Democratic Party (SPD)

[3] Richard Hamilton, *Who Voted for Hitler?* (Princeton, NJ, 1982); Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1983); Jürgen Falter, *Hitlers Wähler* (Munich, 1991); for a summary of the research, see Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, 2nd ed. (London, 2005), 213–23.

[4] Rainer Zitelmann, *Hitler: Selbstverständnis eines Revolutionärs*, 4th ed. (Munich, 1998), 145–74; John Lukacs, *Hitler: Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung* (Munich, 1997), 107–53; Henry Turner, ed., *Hitler aus nächster Nähe: Aufzeichnungen eines Vertrauten 1929–1932* (Berlin, 1978), and *German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler* (Oxford, 1985).

[5] David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution, 1933–1939*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1980); Joachim Fest, *Bürgerlichkeit als Lebensform: Späte Essays* (Hamburg, 2007); George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York, 1964); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (1961; Berkeley, CA, 1974), 195, 197.

[6] Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1933–1934* (Frankfurt, 1977), 128, 8, 14 (entries for July 6, March 17, and March 20, 1933).

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press and press organs of other Nazi opponents pointed to the paradoxical fact that while many *Bürger* voted for the NSDAP, they were held in contempt as a class by the Nazis.[7]

Why has the paradox of National Socialism's antibourgeois antipathy not been more fully recognized in historical research, even though it constituted an integral component of Nazi ideology, as well as of Hitler's personal political convictions? An exploration into this issue remains perforce speculative, but the answer seems to lie in a judicious mix of the following reasons. (1) Once Hitler was firmly ensconced in power, Nazi propaganda dropped its antibourgeois slant in order not to undermine the yet to be created "people's community"; historians of the Third Reich in power therefore minimize its significance. (2) The antibourgeois element was unlikely to receive much attention in the English-speaking world, since the concept of *Bürgertum* as a conceptual category existed neither in Great Britain nor North America. Because Hitler did not specifically attack the "middle classes," the Anglo-American rendition of the term, the issue would not have resonated. (3) The topic received little attention in the German context since the generation of historians working on Nazi Germany from the late 1960s onward were strongly influenced by the values and principles of the *soixante-huitards*. And since criticism of the *Bürgertum* formed an integral part of the 68-ers' own value system, this generation of historians may have been reluctant to attribute to the Nazis something they themselves deemed worthy of criticism. Under no circumstances would they run the risk of sharing any kind of critical link with Nazism. (4) Others erroneously considered the Nazi rise to power a purely "conservative revolution," thereby lumping together, in their view, a "conservative" *Bürgertum* with the "fascists," thus rendering it difficult to draw a distinction between the two. They did not consider that their own potential criticism of the *Bürgertum* and the one motivated and propagated by National Socialism were fundamentally different. (5) Marxist interpretations of fascism as "a violent, dictatorial agent of bourgeois capitalism"[8] rejected any distinction between Nazism and "forces of right authoritarianism."[9] These formed the official doctrine in East Germany and were also adopted by some West German historians, especially between 1965 and 1975.[10] To them, National Socialist opposition to the bourgeoisie was counterintuitive and inexplicably paradoxical, making it understandable that the majority of left-wing historians would downplay the significance of this phenomenon.

[7] Bundesarchiv (BA) Koblenz, Zeitgeschichtliche Sammlung (ZSg.) 103, Sammlung Lauterbach, no. 795, "NSDAP und Bürgertum."

[8] Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism* (Madison, WI, 1995), 442.

[9] Stanley Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison, WI, 1980), 180.

[10] Heinrich-August Winkler, *Revolution, Staat, Faschismus* (Göttingen, 1978); Klaus Hildebrand, *Das Dritte Reich*, 6th ed. (Munich, 2003), 152–56.

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This article addresses the antibourgeois thrust of Nazi ideology. Section I analyzes the significance of the antibourgeois character of National Socialism in light of the important role played by the German bourgeoisie. Sections II and III then turn to antibourgeois statements and propaganda themes from the Nazi press and Nazi deputies before 1933, as well as Hitler's antibourgeois sentiments. Section IV examines the seeming paradox of antibourgeois feelings on the part of the *Bürgertum* itself, while Section V investigates in detail the content and meaning of National Socialist antibourgeois ideology and the values embedded in its "New Man" concept that were juxtaposed to those of the *Bürger*. Section VI shows how, during the decisive six months of the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, National Socialism presented itself as an antibourgeois protest movement in an effort to discredit its coalition partner, the German National People's Party (DNVP), which was depicted as the embodiment of the bourgeois world by the Nazis. In 1933, the Nazi antibourgeois furor included attacks on conservative dignitaries, professions of hatred for the bourgeois way of life with its inbuilt hierarchical educational system, and accusations of bourgeois corruption, embezzlement, indecision, and opportunism. The bourgeois world, so the argument went, had run its course; its day was over. Going beyond antibourgeois rhetoric, Section VII scrutinizes the antibourgeois mood that prevailed in everyday life in National Socialist Germany, with examples from the legal system and National Socialist social policies. Finally, Section VIII places the antibourgeois theme in the context of other European fascist movements, both to emphasize its significance for European fascism as a whole and to show that antibourgeois sentiment as a cultural, and not merely class-bound, antagonism appeared also, for example, with Drieu La Rochelle and Robert Brasillach in France. They, too, saw the bourgeoisie as weakening the moral and martial fiber of the nation.[11]

I

The *Bürgertum* constitutes an important sociopolitical category in German society and was accordingly a central field of German historical research for decades, as reflected in long-term research projects in Heidelberg, Bielefeld, and Frankfurt.[12] The halcyon days of the German bourgeoisie lay in the period be-

[11] Since "bourgeois" and "bourgeoisie" do not always accurately render the meaning of *bürgerlich*, *Bürger*, and *Bürgertum*, the German terms are used here when the context requires it.

[12] Some important titles include Jürgen Kocka, *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1987), and *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, 3 vols. (Munich, 1988); the four-volume collection by Werner Conze and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Bildungsbürgertum in Deutschland*: vol. 1, *Bildungssystem und Professionalisierung im internationalen Vergleich*, ed. Werner Conze and Jürgen Kocka (Stuttgart, 1985); vol. 2, *Bildungsgüter und Bildungswissen*, ed. Reinhard Koselleck (Stuttgart, 1990); vol. 3, *Lebensführung und*

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tween 1800 and 1914, and research on the *Bürgertum* has thus focused on the long nineteenth century. The First World War ushered in its decline, since members of the *Bürgertum* never recovered from the material destitution and inflation that came in the wake of the war.[13] There is no unanimity with respect to the sociological boundaries of the *Bürgertum*; these depend on how the term is defined. According to the Bielefeld research group around Jürgen Kocka, "the nobility, Catholic clergy, peasantry, and the lower classes in town and countryside, including the working class" were not part of the bourgeoisie.[14] For them, the *Bürgertum* consisted mainly of the *Wirtschaftsbürgertum*—entrepreneurs and managers in industry, commerce, banking, and business—and the *Bildungsbürgertum*—secondary-school teachers, lawyers, doctors, university professors, the Protestant clergy, engineers, scientists, and higher civil servants, including those in the administrative and judicial branches. Beginning in the 1840s, members of these two groups increasingly set themselves apart from the petty bourgeois milieu which, in terms of both economic standing and research categorization, gradually became relegated to the margins of the *Bürgertum*.[15] Kocka's definition is not unproblematic insofar as members of the petty bourgeoisie — artisans, master craftsmen, and the middle and lower strata of civil servants and white-collar employees—undoubtedly considered themselves *bürgerlich*. The Frankfurt research group around Lothar Gall, which concentrated its empirical research on western and southern German cities before 1850–70[16]—before an increasingly

ständische Vergesellschaftung, ed. Rainer Lepsius (Stuttgart, 1992); vol. 4, *Politischer Einfluß und gesellschaftliche Formation*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Stuttgart, 1989); Lothar Gall, *Bürgertum in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1989), and Lothar Gall, ed., *Stadt und Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1990); Klaus Tenfelde and Hans-Ulrich Wehler, eds., *Wege zur Geschichte des Bürgertums* (Göttingen, 1994). Interpretive summaries can be found in Utz Haltern, "Die Gesellschaft der Bürger," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 19 (1993): 100–134; Jonathan Sperber, "Bürger, Bürgertum, Bürgerlichkeit, Bürgerliche Gesellschaft: Studies of the German (Upper) Middle Class and Its Socio-Cultural World," *Journal of Modern History* 69 (1997): 271–98.

[13] Hans Mommsen, "Die Auflösung des Bürgertums seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert," in Kocka, *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit*, 288–315.

[14] Jürgen Kocka, "Das europäische Muster und der deutsche Fall," in *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, *Einheit und Vielfalt Europas* (Göttingen, 1995), 9–76, esp. 9; subsequent citations of this work are from the 1995 edition.

[15] Ibid., 10. In the shortened English edition, Kocka notes that "a difficulty has been created by translating the concept of *Bürgertum* into English. Clearly, the term 'middle class' cannot be considered fully equivalent, because it too broadly includes the ranks of small businessmen, office clerks, typists, and other service personnel who are relegated by the German language to the *Kleinbürgertum* (petite bourgeoisie). *Bürgertum* should be understood as a more elitist social category." See Jürgen Kocka and Allan Mitchell, eds., *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 1993), x.

[16] On the differences, see Haltern, "Gesellschaft der Bürger," 104–10; Sperber, "Bürger, Bürgertum," 276–81.

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self-confident *Wirtschafts-* and *Bildungsbürgertum* had distanced itself fully from the lower bourgeois orders—did include the petty bourgeoisie in its definition of the *Bürgertum*. Colloquial German usage has always been closer to Gall's definition, thus influencing the way the term has been used in historical research.[17]

There is agreement that the term *Bürger* constitutes a predominantly German category, semantically encompassing the French *bourgeois* and *citoyen*. The French "bourgeoisie" is closer to Kocka's *Wirtschafts-* and *Bildungsbürgertum* and is thus confined to the upper-middle classes. In contrast to *Bürgertum*, the Anglo-Saxon concept "middle class" signifies predominantly economic status and tends to ignore the important psychological and cultural predispositions of *Bürgertum*, which was held together by its value system and way of life.[18] The *Bürgertum*'s common traits were epitomized in mentality and cultural orientations rather than socioeconomic attributes. There is widespread agreement that the *Bürgertum* was distinct from the proletariat and nobility by virtue of "particular norms, attitudes, and ways of living" and a "complex and historically changeable culture . . . and concepts of life."[19] Norbert Elias and Pierre Bourdieu have stressed the importance of symbolic attributes such as table manners and conventions, titles, and a refined style of life as an essential part of the *Bürgertum*'s identity.[20] A mental attitude that stressed a positive orientation toward work, high esteem for the family, and emphasis on individuals' private lives constituted another common denominator.[21] *Bürgerlichkeit* (being bourgeois) is

[17] See, e.g., Oded Heilbronner, "The Failure That Succeeded: Nazi Party Activity in a Catholic Region in Germany, 1929–1932," *Journal of Contemporary History* 22 (1992): 521–49, "Die NSDAP—ein bürgerlicher Verein?," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für Deutsche Geschichte* 23 (1994): 65–78, and "Der verlassene Stammtisch: Vom Verfall der bürgerlichen Infrastruktur und dem Aufstieg der NSDAP am Beispiel der Region Schwarzwald," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 19 (1993): 178–201. The *bürgerlichen Vereine* in the Black Forest, on which Heilbronner focuses in these articles, consisted mostly of artisans, shopkeepers, white-collar employees, and petty officials; fewer than 10 percent of its members belonged to the *Besitz-* and *Bildungsbürgertum*.

[18] Manfred Riedel offers a history of the concept in "Bürger, Staatsbürger, Bürgertum," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1972), 672–726; for a comparison with other European countries, see the essays by Eric Hobsbawn, Hartmut Kaelble, and Marco Meriggi in Kocka, *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1.

[19] Jürgen Kocka, "Bürgertum und Bürgerlichkeit als Probleme der deutschen Geschichte vom späten 18. zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert," in Kocka, *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit*, 21–64, esp. 44.

[20] Nobert Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, vol. 1, *Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt, 1977), 32–34; Pierre Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede: Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft* (Frankfurt, 1982).

[21] According to Kocka, the degree of *Bürgerlichkeit* is synonymous with the extent to which these *bürgerlich* norms and behavior patterns dominate in any given society (Kocka, *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit*, 45).

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thus defined as "a socially determined and culturally-shaped way of being: multi-layered and varied, but at the same time an essentially binding cultural model that encompasses significant elements of social identity."[22] Large sections of German society were committed to this cultural model and its socially integrating consequences even after the decline of the *Bürgertum* following the First World War. The bourgeois culture of German neohumanism with its conception of *Bildung*—character formation based on the concept of continual self-improvement—formed an important part of German identity.[23] This was emphasized in the ideological battles during World War I, when "profound" German culture was contrasted with "superficial" Western civilization and the accusation of German "barbarism" was countered by references to the depth of German learning and *Bildung*, as well as the number of German Nobel Prize recipients.[24]

Since the values and way of life of the *Bürgertum* were thus linked with Germany's accomplishments, it is astonishing that the extremely nationalistic Nazi party turned so vociferously against it. The antibourgeois orientation must therefore have been a genuine cause for the Nazis, since they had to reckon with the possibility that parts of their electorate—low-echelon civil servants and the petty bourgeois *Mittelstand*—would be alienated by the party's antibourgeois stance. While National Socialists' criticism of the *Bürgertum* was implicitly directed against the upper bourgeois propertied and educated elite, this was not always clear from the context in which the charges were levied. Since even after the social upheavals of World War I, the Revolution of 1918/19, and the inflation, other social groups, such as white-collar employees, middle-echelon civil servants, and urban artisans (in particular master craftsmen), considered themselves *bürgerlich*, it is possible that in certain instances even these peripheral *bürgerlich* groups may have considered themselves to be the object of Nazi accusations.

By the beginning of 1932, as soon as electoral successes brought the Nazi party closer to political power, antibourgeois criticism became more sporadic and gradually fell by the wayside altogether. This was only to be expected: National Socialists attacked bourgeois values as a way to tap into social resentment to gain power. Once power came within reach they needed both to exploit these same values in order to legitimate their role as a fulfillment of historical destiny and to recast them into a radical new ideology in order to realize their revolutionary

[22] Wolfgang Kaschuba, "Deutsche Bürgerlichkeit nach 1800: Kultur als symbolische Praxis," in *Wirtschaftsbürger und Bildungsbürger*, vol. 2 of *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Göttingen, 1995), 92–128, esp. 101.

[23] Rudolf Vierhaus, "Bildung," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhardt Koselleck (Stuttgart, 1972), 1:508–52.

[24] Hermann Lübbe, "Die politischen Ideen von 1914," in *Politische Philosophie in Deutschland* (Munich, 1974), 171–237; Klaus Schwabe, "Die politische Haltung der deutschen Professoren im ersten Weltkrieg," *Historische Zeitschrift* 193 (1961): 601–34, and *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral* (Göttingen, 1969).

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goals. After its 1932 electoral successes, when the NSDAP became the strongest party by far, National Socialist propaganda changed course by emphasizing the yet to be created *Volksgemeinschaft* and by placing its movement in a line of historical continuity with the Prussian/German past. This was depicted on postcards and posters that suggested an unbroken connection from Frederick the Great to Bismarck, Hindenburg, and finally Hitler.[25] This change of orientation, as a takeover of power was in sight, was driven by the National Socialists' goal of winning over the whole of the German people, including the *Bürgertum*, whose values and culture they had deprecated and abused on the road to power.

II

National Socialism's aversion to the bourgeoisie and bourgeois parties was a familiar theme in political debates during the rise of the NSDAP in the 1920s and early 1930s, when Nazi antibourgeois sentiments were discussed in some detail in the daily press. The Nazi party also used these attacks on the *Bürgertum* and everything it embodied to distance itself from the Weimar system—its alleged decadence, corruption, and policy of foul compromises—so they occasionally used the term in conjunction with parliamentarianism, liberal democracy, and the hated republic. Criticism of the *Bürgertum* did not usually focus on social-class characteristics; it constituted an attack on a particular *Weltanschauung*, a way of life and a culture that supposedly enfeebled Germany and rendered it unfit for struggle in the conflicts to come. This primarily cultural and ideological criticism of the bourgeoisie and bourgeois forms of life was shared by all factions and groups within the Nazi Party. It would be entirely wrong to assume that, in the 1920s, for example, it was less prevalent with Hitler than with the party's left wing around Joseph Goebbels and Gregor and Otto Strasser.[26] Criticism continued unabated after Otto Strasser and his followers left the NSDAP in the summer of 1930. Bourgeois and Social Democratic newspapers frequently commented upon antibourgeois statements of National Socialist deputies in the Reichstag, in the parliaments of the different German states, and in the press; special attention was accorded to contradictions between the antibourgeois posture of the Nazi party and the fact that bourgeois voters comprised a significant part of its constituency.

[25] See Manfred Schlenke, "Das 'Preußische Beispiel' in Propaganda und Politik des Nationalsozialismus," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 27 (1968): 16–23; Wolfgang Wippermann, "Nationalsozialismus und Preußentum," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 52–53 (1981): 13–22.

[26] On factions within the NSDAP, see Dietrich Orlow, *History of the Nazi Party, 1919–1933*, vol. 1 (Pittsburgh, 1969); Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (New York, 1999), 255–313; Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York, 2004), 195–230.

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In November 1929 Hitler published a long piece in the *Völkischer Beobachter* in which he castigated the "political unreliability, half-heartedness, cowardliness, opportunism, and inertia of bourgeois political parties," asserting that he fully understood every Social Democrat and Communist "in his inner abhorrence of bourgeois parties."[27] The bourgeois press then reprinted these tirades and lavished them on those *bürgerliche* voters who might consider giving their votes to the "minions of this man." At the same time, readers were warned not to cast their vote for Hitler, since he stood outside respectable "bourgeois society."[28]

Before the September 1930 elections, which saw the breakthrough of the NSDAP as the second strongest party when its share of the vote increased from 2.6 percent to 18.3 percent, the bourgeois press repeated its urgent warnings not to vote NSDAP given the ongoing anti-*bürgerlich* Nazi outbursts in the months before the election.[29] At the end of March 1930, Gregor Strasser, head of the NSDAP's party organization, spoke of the obligatory war against the *Bürgertum* as the enemy of German socialism and saboteur of national freedom, while Ernst Graf von Reventlow, a figurehead of the Nazi left wing, wrote in his weekly *Reichswart* that National Socialists considered "the *Bürgertum*, as it is and will continue to be in Germany, something that must disappear and is ripe for downfall."[30] These and other invectives, ranging from insults directed at the "bourgeois rabble devoid of instinct" and attacks on the "stupidity and baseness of their views" to the claim that National Socialist goals and ideals could be realized "only in opposition to the *Bürgertum*," were printed and reprinted in the bourgeois press before the September election to plead with readers not to give their votes to Hitler, since this would inevitably result in the deprivation of their own rights.[31]

The secessionist Nazi left wing around Gregor Strasser's brother, Otto Strasser, accused Hitler shortly after the elections of giving up on the working classes and turning completely to the *Bürgertum*: "The increase of 5½ million votes for the NSDAP is from *bürgerlich* voters. Hitler's party today is a purely *bürgerlich*

[27] "Wer ist Sieger? Das Versagen des Bürgertums im Kampf gegen den Marxismus," *Völkischer Beobachter*, November 20, 1929, at BA Koblenz, ZSg. 103, Sammlung Lauterbach, no. 795, "NSDAP und Bürgertum."

[28] "Hitler und das deutsche Bürgertum," *Hannoversche Landeszeitung*, November 29, 1929, at BA Koblenz, ZSg. 103, Sammlung Lauterbach, no. 795, "NSDAP und Bürgertum."

[29] BA Koblenz, ZSg. 103, Sammlung Lauterbach, no. 795: "NSDAP und Bürgertum," *Bayerischer Kurier*, August 29, 1930.

[30] BA Koblenz, ZSg. 103, Sammlung Lauterbach, no. 795, "NSDAP und Bürgertum." On Reventlow, see Otto-Ernst Schüddekopf, *Linke Leute von Rechts: Die nationalrevolutionären Minderheiten und der Kommunismus in der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart, 1960); Stefan Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer: Deutscher Adel und Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt, 2004), 37–38, 172–73, 184–85, 251–52; Klaus-Peter Hoepke, *Die deutsche Rechte und der italienische Faschismus* (Düsseldorf, 1968), 207–14, 250–52, 316–17.

[31] "Nationalsozialisten gegen Bürgertum," *Hannoverscher Kurier*, September 4, 1930.

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party; it has become the strongest *bürgerlich* party by far."[32] Otto Strasser had broken with Hitler and left the NSDAP in July 1930 with a group of followers. Yet this circle of rebels remained small and insignificant, since no Reichstag deputies, Gauleiter, or higher SA leaders had joined them, and other proponents of the left wing, including Gregor Strasser and Graf Reventlow, remained loyal to Hitler.[33] The secession of the left wing had no influence on the intensity of antibourgeois pronouncements. National Socialist attacks on the *Bürgertum* relentlessly continued after the September 1930 elections: on December 2, for example, Joseph Goebbels grandiloquently proclaimed himself unwilling to tolerate "being mentioned in the same breath as the stinking muck heap of rotting *bürgerlich* parties."[34] On December 10, in the course of discussions on a new German penal code in the Reichstag, Nazi deputy Wilhelm Karpenstein declared that "*bürgerlich* slime from the middle" made him "want to throw up," and, in early January 1931, Nazi papers asserted that the main reason the *Bürgertum* had to be opposed was because it "refuses to recognize the right of existence of the German worker" and was "to blame for the rise of an internationally minded proletariat in Germany."[35] These allegations in conjunction with continually repeated charges that the *Bürgertum* "has failed miserably in the struggle against Marxism ever since 1918"[36] were reiterated in various forms before 1933.

The year 1931 marked the high point of Nazi antibourgeois indictments. In mid-January, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the foundation of the German Empire, Goebbels's *Angriff* made it clear that National Socialists were fighting not for the reestablishment of a passé *bürgerlich* empire but for a new Third Reich.[37] On January 29, in a session of the Saxon parliament, a National Socialist deputy, openly and without compunction, used the term "*bürgerlich* riffraff," whereupon he was expelled from the proceedings.[38] And in March, Graf Reventlow accused the *Bürgertum* of being unwilling to make the one sacrifice that could lead to a genuine *Volksgemeinschaft*—eliminating the conceit "with which *bürgerlich* sets imagine that they are better than their other compatriots."[39] Throughout 1931, National Socialist publications were replete with charges that "Marxism and *Bürgertum* murder German youth," accompanied by crusades

[32] "Der Bürger Hitler," *Der Nationale Sozialist*, no. 175, September 18, 1930.

[33] Reinhard Kühnl, *Die nationalsozialistische Linke 1925–1930* (Meisenheim, 1966), 248–61.

[34] *Der Angriff*, December 2, 1930; *Der Jungdeutsche*, December 5, 1930.

[35] Reichstag, 12. Sitzung, December 10, 1930, and *Niedersächsischer Beobachter*, no. 3, 1931, at BA Koblenz, ZSg. 103, Sammlung Lauterbach, no. 795, "NSDAP und Bürgertum."

[36] "Gegen die Reaktion," *Der Angriff*, no. 9, January 12, 1931.

[37] *Der Angriff*, no. 15, January 19, 1931.

[38] *Osnabrücker Volkszeitung*, no. 35, February 4, 1931; *Bayerischer Kurier*, no. 40, February 9, 1931.

[39] *Der Angriff*, March 28, 1931.

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against "the completely stultified *Bürgertum*" and expressions of contempt for the "wretched rabble of the *bürgerlich* middle-of-the-road parties."[40]

In the weeks before the "Harzburger Front" of October 11, 1931, when the Nazis came together in a tactical alliance against the Weimar Republic with parties and organizations of the political Right, antibourgeois remarks temporarily subsided. Yet the deceptive truce of this "National Front," which lacked a viable political foundation, was of short duration, so that only weeks after Harzburg the National Socialists emphasized their opposition to the *Bürgertum* with renewed vigor. As the Hannover SPD paper *Volkswille* gleefully discovered, a mere two weeks after Harzburg, a Nazi deputy compared the *Bürgertum* to a maggoty mushroom, and another Nazi leader called it a "*Schweinebande*."[41] During the winter of 1931–32 Social Democratic papers continued taking obvious pleasure in commenting on differences in the camp of the nationalist Right. Antibourgeois accusations were now used to attack the German National People's Party (DNVP), emphasizing that the heir of Prussian traditions was Adolf Hitler and not (the conservative) Herr von Oldenburg-Januschau and that, as a consequence, class conflicts and normative perceptions of status must lose their meaning.[42] In 1932, with the presidential elections, the Prussian parliamentary election of April 24, and the Reichstag election of July 31, the NSDAP became far and away the strongest party, so that the legal assumption of power became a distinct possibility. In order not to discourage the support of center-right parties for a possible coalition with the NSDAP, antibourgeois tirades became more subdued until the campaign for the next Reichstag elections on November 6, 1932, when National Socialists again vehemently attacked the conservative establishment as embodied in the Papen government and its supporter, the DNVP.

During the first phase of the Nazi seizure of power between January 30 and July 14, 1933, when all parties except for the NSDAP were officially banned, antibourgeois rhetoric and propaganda reached their culmination. In the spring of 1933 verbal salvos even escalated into physical attacks on German National party members and organizations. Now the antibourgeois character of National Socialism developed a momentum of its own, serving several purposes at once: it highlighted the distinctiveness of the National Socialist movement and drew a demarcation line between itself and the NSDAP's German National coalition partner; made Nazism more attractive to the lower and lower-middle classes by virtue of its antibourgeois stance; and used antipathy toward the propertied and educated bourgeoisie to discredit the DNVP's base, pushing through Nazism's

[40] BA Koblenz, ZSg. 103, Sammlung Lauterbach, no. 795: "NSDAP und Bürgertum."
[41] *Volkswille*, no. 251, October 27, 1931.
[42] BA Koblenz, ZSg. 103, Sammlung Lauterbach, no. 795, "NSDAP und Bürgertum"; *Hildesheimer Volksblatt*, January 8, 1932; *Der Niedersachse*, February 5, 1932.

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claim to the sole possession of power.[43] After the summer of 1933, when the Nazi regime was firmly ensconced in power, antibourgeois propaganda in the daily press dropped off through the second half of the war. Now that Nazi rhetoric focused on the creation of an all-inclusive German community, the *Bürgertum* was to be won over and fully integrated.

With the turning of the tide of battle during World War II, antibourgeois epithets were revived in the fall of 1942, when it was suggested in the German press that no "bourgeois" state would survive the war. But now it was the enemy powers England and the United States that were connected with the pejorative term *Bürgertum*. Both were characterized as "superficial" and as "bourgeois democracies . . . incapable of comprehending the idealistic élan of our way of war." In the European order to be created after the war, their "plutocratic" cultures would not survive, and there would no longer be room "for the old capitalist form of the bourgeois state."[44] While the *Bürgertum* had been used as an object of domestic contempt before 1933, the term now served to belittle the foreign enemy; in both roles the *Bürgertum* was made out to be on the losing side. In mid-November 1944, when even the greatest optimists could no longer harbor any illusions about the war being lost, Otmar Best, editor-in-chief of the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, argued along similar lines.[45] Best accused the "still existing bourgeois world outside of Germany," especially England, the United States, and "DeGaulle's France," of the exact same blindness toward the dangers of Soviet Bolshevism that the German *Bürgertum* had evinced toward the German Communist Party (KPD) before 1933. Similar remarks about "the collaboration of *bürgerlich* circles with Bolshevism"—the Nazi characterization of the Grand Coalition against the Third Reich—were also to be found in numerous press reports from the second half of the war, which Friedrich Kellner, a Hessian justice official and courageous opponent of the Nazi regime, pasted into his recently published diaries, so that they could be handed down to posterity.[46]

III

The progression of Hitler's anti-*bürgerlich* pronouncements displayed the same tendency as those in Nazi press reports: they became less frequent as soon as

[43] Hermann Beck, "Konflikte zwischen Deutschnationalen und Nationalsozialisten während der Machtergreifungszeit," *Historische Zeitschrift* 292, no. 3 (2011): 645–81.

[44] "Die bürgerliche Welt versinkt," *Niedersächsische Tageszeitung*, October 1, 1942.

[45] "Vom Untergang des Bürgertums," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 15, 1944. Otmar Best was press officer of the foreign ministry under Gustav Stresemann from 1922 to 1927. On his personality, see Ursula von Kardorff, *Berliner Aufzeichnungen 1942 bis 1945*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1997), 87, 159–60.

[46] See Friedrich Kellner, "Vernebelt, verdunkelt sind alle Hirne," *Tagebücher, 1939–1945*, vol. 2 (Göttingen, 2011), 660.

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political power was within reach, though they never disappeared altogether. Antibourgeois sentiments can be traced throughout his entire political career, beginning in his speeches from the early 1920s and in numerous places in *Mein Kampf*.[47] They appeared frequently in his talks and newspaper articles between 1925 and 1931, but then they rarely surfaced in his public proclamations between 1932 and 1945.[48] In the private atmosphere of his "table talk" during the Second World War, anti-*bürgerlich* themes from the 1920s occasionally arose, though mostly as a look back on a past whose problems had been overcome.

Hitler's charges against the *Bürgertum*, which run like a recurring theme throughout his speeches and writings in continual variations between the early 1920s and the early 1930s, are ably and comprehensively examined in Rainer Zitelmann's study, which offers the most complete data on the subject.[49] In Hitler's antibourgeois declarations, the "arrogance of the *Bürgertum*" formed a central theme. Hitler accused the *Bürgertum* of having no social conscience: due to its members' status consciousness they had considered it beneath their dignity to deal on an equal footing with the "plebians," opposing their justified demands and thereby driving the masses into the Social Democratic camp.[50] The *Bürgertum*'s inability to devise viable social policies in the interest of Germany's working class thus led to the rise of Marxist workers' parties. This particular facet of Hitler's antibourgeois stance was shared by other European fascists: the French fascist leader Georges Valois equally criticized the bourgeoisie for exploiting workers and the bourgeois state for doing nothing to protect them. According to Valois, it was a shameful ongoing injustice that the bourgeoisie had left the worker "to wallow in ignorance, filth, and misery," especially since "this kind of class selfishness alienated the workers and turned them toward Marxism."[51]

Hitler further took exception to the *Bürgertum*'s hypocrisy and social conceit. In a speech from February 1930, he complained of "wretched arrogance, abominable conceit, and an unjustified superiority that never actually existed" with which the *Bürgertum* looked down upon the working classes.[52] Since bourgeois political parties opposed workers' economic demands in principle, they had lost

[47] See Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 210th ed. (Munich, 1936), 47–48, 110, 190–91, 366–67, 409, 450, 538, 548, 595, 609, 744.

[48] Max Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945*, 4 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1973).

[49] Rainer Zitelmann, *Hitler: Selbstverständnis eines Revolutionärs*, 3rd ed. (Darmstadt, 1990), 147–75. The following analysis partly follows Zitelmann's detailed work.

[50] Adolf Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, ed. Eberhard Jäckel (Stuttgart, 1980), 736, 840, 912.

[51] Quoted in Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The First Wave, 1924–1933* (New Haven, CT, 1986), 167.

[52] *Völkischer Beobachter*, no. 47 (February 26, 1930).

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any influence over the working class.[53] Even after 1933, Hitler occasionally alleged that the *Bürgertum*'s failure to recognize workers' demands had driven them into the Marxist camp. In a speech from November 1938, for example, he emphasized that the main cause for class divisions "has been the social failure of our *Bürgertum*," and since "arrogance and class conceit had so dominated on one side, it was no wonder that class consciousness emerged as a reaction on the other."[54] Proletarian class consciousness was thus considered an understandable reaction to the *Bürgertum*'s social behavior. This theme was again touched upon in Hitler's wartime "table talk," when he spoke of the narrow-mindedness of the Saxon *Bürgertum*, which relentlessly pursued its own advantage and refused to accord workers their place in national life.[55] The term *Bürgertum* is used interchangeably with "upper class," thus making it obvious that Hitler referred exclusively to the *haute bourgeoisie*, that is, the *Wirtschafts-* and *Bildungsbürgertum*, not to the petty bourgeoisie.[56]

Another set of charges focuses on the materialistic mindset of the *Bürgertum* and its alleged unwillingness to make sacrifices for the greater good, whereby the *Bürgertum* equated its own class- and profit-based material interests with the national interest. When the *Bürger* spoke of nationalism, he referred only to the economic interests of his own class. Since the *Bürgertum* characterized itself as "national-minded" and "patriotic," the wide masses of the population automatically associated nationalism with "antisocial convictions."[57] The policies of the *Bürgertum* had thus brought the very concept of nationalism into disrepute with the working classes.[58] National Socialists, on the other hand, had "nothing to do with the cries of 'Hurray!' for a passé monarchy, or with the thoughtless reeling off of songs. . . . Not the greatness of a caste or class, but the greatness of the whole people is what matters to us."[59] In September 1928 Hitler criticized the

[53] Zitelmann, *Hitler*, 150.

[54] Hildegard von Kotze and Helmut Krausnick, *Es spricht der Führer: Sieben exemplarische Hitler-Reden* (Gütersloh, 1966), 237.

[55] *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941–1944: His Private Conversations*, introduction and preface by Hugh Trevor-Roper, 3rd ed. (New York, 2000), 19–20. Except for a few notes from 1943 and 1944, the main emphasis lies in the period between July 5, 1941, and September 7, 1942. For the German editions, see Henry Picker, ed., *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier* (Stuttgart, 1976), 63; Werner Jochmann, ed., *Adolf Hitler: Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1944*, as recorded by Heinrich Heim, rev. ed. (Munich, 2000), 51.

[56] As, e.g., in the English edition, *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941–1944*, 107–08, 133–37, 397, 484, where "upper class" is used interchangeably with "bourgeoisie." See also Hitler's statement "For me the top hat is identical with the bourgeoisie" in Jochmann, *Adolf Hitler: Monologe*, 51.

[57] Zitelmann, *Hitler*, 153.

[58] *Völkischer Beobachter*, no. 81 (April 8, 1927).

[59] Speech of June 26, 1927, quoted in Zitelmann, *Hitler*, 154.

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"*bürgerlich* worldview," because in it nationalism was tied to concepts of class, the economy, and dynastic ideals of legitimacy; and in March 1929, he inveighed against the concept of nationalism in Germany's past, which had been reduced to a class- and economy-based idea.[60]

In yet another complex of charges, Hitler argued that the *Bürgertum* and bourgeois parties had no "ideals," genuine programmatic goals, or a *Weltanschauung*, and thus they were in no position to fight Marxism, since one *Weltanschauung* could be successfully combated only by another. Bourgeois parties fought only for ministerial posts and seats in parliament, not for a great idea, and their programs consisted merely of campaign slogans,[61] so that they could not offer their followers incentives for an all-out effort to fight the ultimate battle. Since the bourgeois world had never possessed one great idea, its period of supremacy in world history would prove to be as short as it was pitiful.[62] In keeping with this theme, in October 1929, Hitler criticized the *Bürgertum*'s "inner halfheartedness and worthlessness," since its thinking was based solely on utilitarian considerations; in February 1930, he claimed that *bürgerlich* political parties had no goals other than the restoration of the past.[63]

A final well-worn recurring theme in Hitler's antibourgeois censures from the 1920s into the Second World War is that of the *Bürgertum*'s indecisiveness, lack of energy, and cowardice in facing life's struggles. Ineptitude at coping with life's challenges would lead to its inexorable downfall. Incapable of political leadership, the *Bürgertum*'s mission had ended. While Marxism exuded "the most brutal confidence in its own victory," the *Bürgertum* was imbued with "slimy cowardice."[64] Similar ideas were expressed by fascist intellectuals in France during the 1930s, who argued that "the bourgeois spirit that had governed the nation had produced a civilization of pretense, of lamination, of stucco and plaster" and that "one must therefore get rid of bourgeois culture."[65] Reminiscing during the war about the early days of his party and its shock troops, the *Stoßtrupp Hitler*, Hitler remarked that "in those days 50 *Bürger* weren't worth as much as one of these guys. . . . I acquired such contempt for the *Bürgertum* during that time."[66] Causally linked with accusations of cowardice was Hitler's reproach—aimed at the *Bildungsbürgertum*—of *Instinktlosigkeit*, that is, the absence of instinct and common sense: "The European intellectual world, university professors and

[60] Zitelmann, *Hitler*, 155.

[61] Speech of December 16, 1925, quoted in Zitelmann, *Hitler*, 157.

[62] *Hitlers Zweites Buch: Ein Dokument aus dem Jahr 1928*, introduction by Gerhard Weinberg (Stuttgart, 1961), 82.

[63] Zitelmann, *Hitler*, 157–58.

[64] Ibid., 159–166, esp. 160.

[65] Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* (Berkeley, CA, 1986), 252.

[66] *Hitler's Table Talk*, 107; Jochmann, *Adolf Hitler: Monologe*, 122.

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higher civil servants, into whose heads knowledge has been stupidly crammed, don't get it. In certain areas professorial scholarship is destructive; it leads away from instinct."[67] In the same vein he remarked that "intellectuals" were "devoid of animalistic vigor,"[68] a theme also common in other fascist movements. George Mosse, for example, averred that the fascist stereotype was "based upon an ideal of male strength and beauty, upon an aggressive virility, an *élan vital*," which was "the very opposite of muddleheaded and talkative intellectuals, of the exhausted old men of a dying bourgeois order"; and Zeev Sternhell argued that "the virile, vigorous fascist, spending his leisure hours on the sports field and the racetrack," constituted "the very antithesis of the bourgeois."[69] Similarly, Hitler deprecated emphasis on deliberation, rational calculation, and analysis—bourgeois virtues par excellence. He considered them to be gnawing away at the fiber of the nation's strength: "So what role can a nation play when it is governed by people of that sort—people who weigh and analyze everything?"[70]

Hitler's antibourgeois strictures were entirely sincere and based on conviction rather than calculation. He was convinced that the *Bürgertum*'s cowardice, frailty, and indecision were rooted in the fact that, as a propertied class, it simply had too much to lose and was thus useless in political struggles. Whoever had possessions to safeguard would never dare risk his life as lightly as those who had none.[71] Marxists had the more active "human material," since once people acquired property, their purpose in life became intertwined with material goods. As he told his Romanian ally Antonescu in 1943, Hitler believed that as a result of the destruction of German cities, those now deprived of their possessions would fight more fanatically than before.[72] In Hitler's view, it was thus unfortunate that the *Bürgertum*, whose members were unwilling to make sacrifices, served as the recruiting base for political leaders in the class-ridden bourgeois state, in which the economically leading class was also politically influential. Devoid of heroic qualities that were indispensible for political leadership, the *Bürger* did not possess the ability to govern.[73] In November 1918, the nation's darkest hour, the *Bürgertum* had failed pathetically. Here again a familiar theme was evoked: the *Bürgertum*, like the "November criminals"—Jews and the leftist parties—were to blame for the defeat in 1918. It was what he perceived as the *Bürgertum*'s behavior in 1918 that explains, more than anything else, Hitler's implacable

[67] Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, 107.
[68] Jochmann, *Adolf Hitler: Monologe*, 123.
[69] George L. Mosse, "Fascism and the Avant Garde," in *The Fascist Revolution* (New York, 1999), 149; Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left*, 279.
[70] *Hitler's Table Talk*, 108.
[71] Zitelmann, *Hitler*, 166.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 168.

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hatred and contempt. Still, Hitler adapted the main thrust of his critique of the *Bürgertum* to suit changing circumstances: as millions of Germans witnessed their Jewish neighbors being deported during the war, he was outraged at members of the *Bürgertum* for showing sympathy toward German Jews. In earlier decades, he ranted, when hundreds of thousands of Germans were forced to emigrate because of material destitution, the *Bürgertum* had remained indifferent to their fate: "This sniveling in which some of the bourgeois are indulging nowadays, on the pretext that the Jews have to clear out of Germany, is just typical of these holier-than-thou's."[74]

After the successful conclusion of the first phase of the Nazi seizure of power in the summer of 1933, Hitler thundered against the political indolence of the *Bürger* in order to increase the political participation of hitherto apolitical Germans, using an interview with Hanns Johst, later president of the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* (Nazi writers' association) to expound his ideas.[75] In this interview, clearly designed as a conciliatory gesture to those *Bürger* who were now prepared to work within the framework of the Third Reich, Hitler distinguished between the apolitical *Spießbürger* (narrow-minded philistines), interested only in their own comforts, and the active *Staatsbürger* (*citoyens*). A part of the bourgeois world, he claimed, had remained inert since prewar times, refusing to shoulder public duty. The *bürgerlich* value of protecting the individual's private life was anathema to Nazi ideology, which was bent on ceaseless political mobilization and the complete destruction of the private realm. National Socialism "captivates the whole nation in all things"; among the people, there thus should be "no single cell that did not feel responsible for the well-being of the entire community."[76] There could be no taking refuge in private life, "no shirking of responsibility from decisions! Every single German must know what he wants! And must be answerable for what he wants!"[77] Here the meaning of the Nazi slogan "whoever is not with us is against us," hits home. When Johst mentioned that, during the republic, Hitler and his party had been subsumed among "the *bürgerlich* wing of the political Right," Hitler countered that he could never "be understood from the *bürgerlich* point of view." The National Socialist state included only "*Staatsbürger*

[74] *Hitler's Table Talk*, 134, 396–97, 484. For the Sicherheitsdienst reports that apprised Hitler about how members of the bourgeoisie were reacting to deportations, see Otto Duv Kulka and Eberhard Jäckel, eds., *Die Juden in den geheimen Stimmungsberichten 1933–1945* (Düsseldorf, 2004), no. 3387 on CD-ROM; Frank Bajohr and Dieter Pohl, *Der Holocaust als offenes Geheimnis* (Munich, 2006), 51.

[75] Max Domarus, ed., *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1973), 349–51. The conversation took place on January 27, 1934, ten days after Johst's appointment to the Prussian Staatsrat. On Johst, see Hermann Weiß, ed., *Biographisches Lexikon zum Dritten Reich*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt, 1998), 244.

[76] Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen*, 349.

[77] Ibid.

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and workers."[78] The "bourgeois" would be abolished; the *Bürger* would survive only in his capacity as *citoyen*: "The German *Bürger* with his night cap must become a *citoyen*, and the comrade with the red cloth cap a people's comrade [*Volksgenosse*]."[79] The very concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* (community of the people) implied "the overcoming of the *bürgerlich* private realm . . . the unconditional identification of the individual's fate with that of the nation, of the individual and people as a whole." Hitler further stressed that to him the worker was more important than the *Bürger*: "I chose the word 'worker' because it is closer to my nature and because I want to reclaim this word for our national strength."[80]

IV

During the Weimar Republic, as Thomas Childers has demonstrated, the Nazi constituency was not socially static. The focus of the NSDAP's electoral strategy and the social composition of its electorate changed between 1924 and 1932, and support for the party varied from election to election.[81] Until 1927, for example, Gregor Strasser (the party's propaganda chief until 1928) had concentrated on winning over the urban proletariat. When this strategy did not reap the expected dividend, Hitler altered the party's electoral strategy at a meeting with regional leaders (Gauleiter) in Weimar on November 27, 1927, shifting the focus to tradesmen, artisans, shopkeepers, and the farming population of rural regions in Thuringia, Mecklenburg, and Schleswig-Holstein.[82] A fall 1927 government report pointed to the pitfalls of the NSDAP's early electoral strategy of appealing to the urban proletariat: by emphasizing the party's social-revolutionary character to win over "communist elements," the NSDAP ran the risk of alienating its *kleinbürgerliche* (petty bourgeois) supporters.[83]

On the other hand, it was not likely that *bürgerliche* voters would be deterred solely on account of the NSDAP's antibourgeois rhetoric. Artisans, shopkeepers, railroad officials, and white-collar employees, all of whom identified with the attribute *bürgerlich*, sensed instinctively that criticism was geared toward certain features of the *Wirtschafts-* and *Bildungsbürgertum* and that antibourgeois state-

[78] Ibid., 350.

[79] Ibid., 351. The singular and plural of some German words, such as *Bürger*, *Arbeiter*, and *Gauleiter*, are identical. When indicating the singular, the English singular verb form is used; when indicating the plural, the English plural verb form is used.

[80] Ibid., 350–51.

[81] Childers, *The Nazi Voter*, 5, 11, 14.

[82] Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936*, 384–85.

[83] Reprinted in Ernst Deuerlein, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP in Augenzeugenberichten* (Düsseldorf, 1968), 286–88. See also Albrecht Tyrell, *Führer befiehl . . . Selbstzeugnisse aus der "Kampfzeit" der NSDAP* (Düsseldorf, 1969), 188.

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ments of Nazi leaders should not be taken too literally as an attack on a social class but were meant as the scornful disparagement of a *Lebensgefühl*, a sensibility, that had outlived its usefulness for the nation.

Among civil servants, for example, the lower and middle ranks instinctively understood from the experience of Weimar election campaigns that the antibourgeois thrust was directed against the upper-echelon officials of the "höhere Dienst." In the 1924 election campaigns, for example, the NSDAP tended to emphasize the effect of the 1923/24 civil service cutbacks on lower- and middle-ranking officials, while the DNVP, for whom most higher officials cast their vote, stressed that as members of Germany's "intellectual and cultural aristocracy," higher officials should not be allowed to "decline socially in relation to other occupational groups."[84] National Socialist support for lower and middle ranks and attacks on the higher ranks remained consistent until after January 30, 1933: during the "national revolution" of March and April 1933, for example, National Socialist complaints offices were instituted at several law courts, where middle-ranking officials were in a position to lodge complaints against their superiors in an attempt to even out social differences with officials of the "höhere Dienst"[85] (see Sec. VI below).

The onset of the Great Depression led parts of the bourgeoisie to share in the gloomy assessment that the glory days of the *Bürgertum* belonged to the past. Wartime defeat coupled with the turmoil and disorder of the early 1920s and the hyperinflation of 1923 had all contributed to the decline of bourgeois culture, whose norms and values had lost their erstwhile function as setting socially binding standards for all of society.[86] In a speech delivered only weeks after the NSDAP's breakthrough at the polls on September 14, 1930, Thomas Mann avowed that the economic decline of the *Bürgertum* was coupled with "a feeling that had preceded material decline as an intellectual prophecy and *Zeitkritik*: the awareness of being in the midst of an epochal change, heralding the end of an age that had dawned with the French Revolution and its ideas. A new *Seelenlage* [mind-set] of mankind has been proclaimed, one that refuses to have anything to do with the age of the bourgeoisie and its principles: liberty, justice, *Bildung*, optimism, belief in progress."[87] Recognition of a superannuated and seemingly

[84] Childers, *Nazi Voter*, 91–102, esp. 99. Civil servants in Prussia were not allowed to join the NSDAP after 1929.

[85] BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, DNVP, Politischer Schriftwechsel, April 12, 1933, R 8005, no. 19, 6; BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, DNVP, Politischer Schriftwechsel, April 3, 1933, R 8005, no. 19, 63–64.

[86] Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1978), 41–53. As a French observer noted in 1931, the system of values of the once solid and unshakeable German society seemed to have lost its bearings.

[87] Thomas Mann, "Deutsche Ansprache: Ein Appell an die Vernunft," in *Essays: Politik*, ed. Hermann Kurzke (Frankfurt, 1977), 109–25, esp. 114.

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defunct bourgeois culture had thus spread to the point that some representative figures of the *Bürgertum* itself understood the new mindset. Still others shared in the criticism of the bourgeoisie as responsible for Germany's decline.[88]

Since criticism of the *Bürgertum* was leveled from different vantage points during the republic, National Socialists could appeal to antibourgeois sentiments without damaging their own cause with voters: some bourgeois voters were estranged by what they perceived as the inordinate importance of big business in the DVP or DNVP, others by the patrician style of DNVP politicians, and others still by the lack of a socially responsible national policy.[89] In this context, the NSDAP's much-emphasized goal of integrating the working classes into the *Volksgemeinschaft* had widespread appeal.

Included in the critique of the *bürgerlich* lifestyle from within were younger Germans from the *haute bourgeoisie* who rebelled against their parents and their authoritarian-elitist upbringing. A prominent case in point is that of Melita Maschmann, who freely professed that no political catchphrase "ever fascinated me as much as the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*."[90] Maschmann had nothing but scorn for the bourgeois *Standesdünkel* (conceit) of her parents and joined the NSDAP against their wishes. The goal that attracted her most in National Socialism, the formation of a "people's community," first and foremost "had to provide protection and justice for the underdog" and could "be realized only though the struggle against the prejudice of the class from which I came."[91] Maschmann was convinced that her "own childhood experiences were representative of those of a whole generation that was brought up in the ranks of the conservative bourgeoisie from which rose many young leaders of the National Socialist 'movement' and the Wehrmacht of the Third Reich."[92] National Socialist attacks on bourgeois lifestyle and values thus tapped into political, socioeconomic, and generational disputes within the *Bürgertum* itself, allowing the NSDAP to lure voters from the very *Bürgertum* they vilified.

[88] A case in point here is Carl Schmitt, in whose pamphlet, *Staatsgefüge und Zusammenbruch des zweiten Reiches: Der Sieg des Bürgers über den Soldaten* (Hamburg, 1934), the "politically" reasoning "liberal Bürger" is held responsible for the demise of the German Empire. Schmitt considers "das Politische" as a symptom of decline of a once healthy (because unpolitical) community. See Raimund von dem Busche, *Konservatismus in der Weimarer Republik: Die Politisierung des Unpolitischen* (Heidelberg, 1998), 179–88. I also wish to thank Joseph Bendersky for valuable insights regarding Schmitt.

[89] Childers, *Nazi Voter*, 142–78, 211–43.

[90] Melita Maschmann, *Fazit: Kein Rechtfertigungsversuch*, 3rd ed. (1963; Munich, 1980), 8.

[91] Ibid., 8, 53, 54.

[92] Ibid., 10.

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V

Nazi criticism of the *Bürgertum* was expressed in its most detailed and elaborate form in the *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte*, the ideological mouthpiece of the NSDAP. Here the analysis was more sophisticated and complex than in the Nazi daily press. In 1930, Graf Ernst von Reventlow, for example, accused the *Bürgertum* of being politically indecisive and opportunistic.[93] Its members, he argued, had departed from their original political liberalism and swerved ever more to the right, so that now "German conservatism had fallen prey to embourgeoisement." By its very nature the *Bürgertum* was unable to comprehend "that life presents man with an uncompromising 'either-or,'" so that its members were loath to go on fighting to the bitter end. The *Bürgertum* had to disappear from the historical stage altogether: "The *Bürger* and the *Bürgertum* in its past and present form must not be allowed to return. May both disappear as quickly as possible, [to be] ruined by their false god, money, their irresoluteness, frailty, and their dull, self-satisfied philosophy of life."[94] It was Reventlow who had popularized in the NSDAP the catchphrase "German socialism" as a community of struggle in Germany's hour of need.[95]

Goebbels took the same line and faulted the *Bürger*'s excessive readiness to compromise, the absence of a "sense of exclusiveness that demands either everything or nothing at all," and an unwillingness to engage in battle. In the resoluteness of their political views the National Socialists stood alone: "The front that stands opposed to us reaches . . . from Westarp to Thälmann [i.e., from conservatives to communists], and what lies in between differs only in nuance, not in fundamentals."[96] Despite occasional alliances with bourgeois parties there were no real common political interests. The philosophical chasm between the two sides was too wide: "They are captives of their own bourgeois mindset."[97] This is reminiscent of the words of Drieu la Rochelle, who, in defining what separated fascists from conservative monarchists, argued: "A monarchist is never a true fascist . . . because a monarchist is never modern: he has none of the brutality or the barbaric simplicity of the modern."[98] In Goebbels's view, National Socialism

[93] Graf Ernst von Reventlow, "Nemesis über dem Bürgertum," *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* 1 (1930): 5–11.

[94] Ibid., 11.

[95] According to Werner Best, after the war in 1950. See Ulrich Herbert, *Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1903–1989*, 2nd ed. (Bonn, 1996), 104.

[96] Joseph Goebbels, "Das patriotische Bürgertum," *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* 1 (1930): 221–29, esp. 222 and 225.

[97] Ibid., 226–227.

[98] Quoted in Zeev Sternhell, "Fascist Ideology," in *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, ed. Walter Laqueur (Berkeley, CA, 1976), 315–78, esp. 341.

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thus stood alone as a new antibourgeois, unspent, unspoiled, and uncompromising force, signifying a break with the bourgeois past of the German Empire: "The three-class franchise classifying voters along property lines, the social 'pittance' legislation, the limited comprehension of the subject, the 'lord-of-the manor' way of thinking, the industrial capitalist firebrands, all of these are typical fabrications of conservative reactionaries."[99]

In western Europe, the Nazi leadership's mental break with the empire was noted, but wrongly interpreted. In Great Britain, for example, it was widely believed that National Socialism should not be equated with the "sterile German nationalism of 1914," and after the Nazi seizure of power, Hitler himself appeared to be the lesser of two evils by comparison to the Prussian Junkers. After a meeting with Goebbels in February 1934, Anthony Eden wrote: "Of one thing I am confident, the new Germany of Hitler and Goebbels is to be preferred to the old of Bülow."[100] In France, Nazism also appeared less menacing than Prussianism. As late as 1936, Bertrand de Jouvenel contrasted "Nazi good-naturedness" with "Prussian formality" and expressed an admiration of Nazi egalitarianism.[101]

A new note was struck in Nazi antibourgeois proclamations during the period of the seizure of power in the winter and spring of 1933. Familiar themes—disparagement of the "class conceit of the *Bürger*"[102] and the goal of overcoming the "differences between classes and estates,"[103] were now fused with the National Socialist concept of the "New Man." The hierarchical, exclusive nature of bourgeois society was vehemently rejected, and it was argued that the great offense of the bourgeois epoch was its legacy of a deep social divide that "defrauded the German state of millions of its best people," who were driven into the hands of Marxist parties.[104] The National Socialist interior minister Wilhelm Frick emphasized the importance of "incorporating the fourth estate—German workers—into the state as citizens with equal rights," arguing that it was a central concern of the new state to abolish "differences between classes and estates."[105] The creation of the new Germany entailed not merely the reorganization of the German state but also the making of a "New German Man" to ensure the continued existence of

[99] Ibid., 225.

[100] Gottfried Niethardt, "Zwischen negativem Deutschlandbild und Primat des Friedens: Großbritannien und der Beginn der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft," in *Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung*, ed. Wolfgang Michalka (Paderborn, 1984), 274–87, esp. 278.

[101] Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left*, xix; on Betrand de Jouvenel, see Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933–1939* (New Haven, CT, 1995), 282–87.

[102] Walther Schmitt, "Unser Wille zum deutschen Sozialismus," *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* 35 (February 1933): 82–86, esp. 84.

[103] Wilhelm Frick, "Der Sinn unserer Zeit," *NS-Monatshefte* 39 (June 1933): 245.

[104] Schmitt, "Unser Wille," 84.

[105] Frick, "Sinn unserer Zeit," 245–46.

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the revolutionary changes under way. This New German Man of the future would transcend the *Bürger* by being free of status-conscious conceit and hatred.[106] The virtues and values attributed to this figure implied an attack on the *Bürgertum*, one that would have resonated with German citizens in the early 1930s. In the winter and spring of 1933 several prominent members of the *Bürgertum* had been implicated in corruption scandals, and accusations against them were widely publicized in the National Socialist press.[107] Given that "Condemnation of Self-Interest" was now elevated to the level of a moral imperative, it was clear that the traits the new regime projected onto their "New Man" were designed to revile those with which the *Bürgertum* was associated.[108] National Socialist victory would not be assured simply by assuming power. The movement would be victorious only once every person "felt responsible for fulfilling its ideals and embodied the new worldview as a New Man both for himself personally and for his fellow men." In the context of the antibourgeois "Condemnation of Self-Interest," it is emphasized that National Socialism would "tightly curtail self-interest" by imposing "severe penalties on fraud, usury, enrichment at the expense of others, and mercilessly rooting out everything that endangers the probity of public life." Another fundamental value of the New Man of National Socialism was "Respect for the Individual." Here it was stressed that people ought to be judged according to their "human value" and not, as hitherto, "according to birth, possessions, rank, and title" and that "the classification of humanity according to professional status, taxes paid, and class rankings is unworthy of a genuinely civilized people." In the new national community, "predominantly materialistic" values would no longer have a place.[109]

Given the reality of the Nazi state, it is not without irony that the other cardinal virtues of the New Man of National Socialism included the "Imperative of Truthfulness," "Readiness to Help Others," and "Honorable Behavior"—all of which were counterposed to the "Gospel of Personal Advantages," the latter being considered a bourgeois characteristic. Nazi values consistently stressed sacrifice and the effort to attain the greater good: work would be endowed with "joy, as soon as we feel ourselves to be servants of the people and honorary laborers in pursuit of the common weal." Strict fulfillment of duty was to be of

[106] Schmitt, "Unser Wille," 85. In time, this concept of the "New Man" would also acquire a biological component.

[107] Such as, e.g., the German National mayor (*Oberbürgermeister*) of Düsseldorf, Robert Lehr, and the former commissioner for job creation Günther Gereke. The accusations were largely unjustified, and both were victims of concerted defamation campaigns. See Friedrich Winterhager, *Günther Gereke: Ein Minister im Spannungsfeld des Kalten Krieges*, 2nd ed. (Ludwigsfelde, 2003).

[108] F. O. Bilse, "Die sittliche Forderung in Nationalsozialismus," *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* 39 (June 1933): 263–76.

[109] Ibid., 267.

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use to the "greater whole" and would "promote its advancement."[110] No place remained for the pursuit of individual profit. "Sense of Duty" was another principal virtue, whereby it was noted that "strictly personal interests give ground to a higher law" that considers work as a "service to the whole." It was "bourgeois" virtues such as these that led George Mosse to suggest that "the New German Man was the ideal bourgeois." According to Mosse, National Socialism successfully usurped middle-class virtues, such as "honest work, cleanliness, loyalty, [and] a neat appearance," that were under siege in modern times.[111] In this, as Igor Golomstock pointed out, Mosse overlooked the salient fact that under totalitarian regimes these universal values acquired a completely new meaning, to the point that "devotion" signified blind faith in the Führer, "optimism" meant an uncritical attitude toward the present, and a readiness to make sacrifices could well mean murder or betrayal.[112]

In 1933, the concept of the "New Man" pervaded the entire National Socialist discourse. It was continually stressed that "the new type of human being signifies the end of the age of the property-owning bourgeois" and that this New Man "does not live for himself, but as an integral part of a living whole."[113] The new human being, it held, "lives in conscious service of the community, but with a deeply personal sense of responsibility. He is not a person 'in his own right,' and not the embodiment of a class, but of his people."[114] While this motif of the "New Man" can also be found in other fascist movements, National Socialists described its distinguishing features in greater detail. George Mosse wrote that "the new fascist man provided the ideal stereotype for all fascist movements," and he went on to argue that "the fascist ideal of the New Man inherits from the hated Enlightenment the concept that a new man can be created through education and experience," though he describes him mostly in physical terms.[115]

Connected with the creation of the "New Man" was Nazi criticism of the "entitlement character" of the bourgeois state as reflected in the rigid structure of the German educational system with its innate class bias that excluded lower-class children, such as the "born leaders among the sons of workers and peasants," from rising to positions of political influence.[116] The attack on the *Bürger*

[110] Ibid., 273.

[111] George Mosse, *Nazism: A Historical and Comparative Analysis of National Socialism* (Brunswick, NJ, 1998), 43.

[112] Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art* (New York, 1990), 214–15. I would like to thank Stanley Payne for the references to Mosse and Golomstock.

[113] Günther Gründel, *Die Sendung der jungen Generation* (Munich, 1933), 327–37, reprinted in *Fascism*, ed. Roger Griffin (Oxford, 1995), 128.

[114] Ibid.

[115] George L. Mosse, "Toward a General Theory of Fascism," and "Fascism and the French Revolution," in *The Fascist Revolution*, 88, 30, respectively.

[116] Schmitt, "Unser Wille," 85.

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and the bourgeois way of life was expressed here as an assault on bourgeois society and its class barriers. During the period of the seizure of power the antibourgeois and egalitarian posture of National Socialism was inspired by a very concrete interest—to supplant those members of bourgeois parties still in positions of power in the spring of 1933. The destruction of class barriers and the entitlement character of the bourgeois state therefore became central themes during the Nazi takeover. As a functionary of the "National Socialist Factory Cells" put it, the "basic problem in Germany" was "class conceit." In "Adolf Hitler's German workers' state it is of no consequence whether someone is a street cleaner or a chief executive."[117] In the bourgeois state of the past, it was held, "barriers had been erected, walls put up, and ditches dug that could be overcome only by those who, by virtue of birth, property, or education, had the necessary tools at their disposal to surmount these obstacles."[118] People had put too much emphasis on "specialized expertise and outward appearances," all of which led to the neglect of man's "conscience, honor, and character."[119]

VI

In the winter and spring of 1933, National Socialism thus presented itself as a protest movement against bourgeois lifestyles, which partly accounted for its increasing popularity in all sectors of the population.[120] An anti-*bürgerlich* way of thinking was especially widespread within National Socialist student organizations: "We see him as that eternal element of decomposition responsible for our national misery and domestic strife. We want to give him the name he deserves and brand him for all time; we want to throw our boundless contempt and disgust into this one word: '*Bürger*.'"[121] Other student publications depicted "bourgeois man" as "the epitome of spiritless mediocrity, devoid of revolutionary fervor, awash with lackluster, hidebound immobility," underscoring that "in the World War we saw the beginning, and in the National Socialist revolution the realization

[117] BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, Pressearchiv Reichslandbund, R 8034 II, no. 9030, 185.

[118] "Das Ende des Bürgers," at BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, Pressearchiv Reichslandbund, R 8034 II, no. 9030, 183.

[119] Ibid. Betrand de Jouvenel expressed admiration for what he considered Nazi egalitarianism in action: party dignitaries and typists fraternizing at Nazi party headquarters and the doorkeeper at the law courts leading "the corporation of the Magistrate" at the national ceremonies of May 1; see Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left*, xix.

[120] Hermann Beck, *The Fateful Alliance: German Conservatives and Nazis in 1933* (Oxford, 2008).

[121] Quoted from "Schlagt die Reaktion, wo ihr sie trefft," *Der Heidelberger Student*, no. 3 (1934): 1, cited in Michael Grüttner, *Studenten im Dritten Reich* (Paderborn, 1995), 248.

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of the liquidation of everything *bürgerlich*."[122] Another theme—paradoxical for being propounded by university students and thus future members of the academic elite—was the unconditional rejection of the traditions of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. In their view, a core element of National Socialism was the rejection of "West European civilization," in particular "its absolute disdain for so-called *Bildung*": "Anyone taken in by the hollow claptrap of *Bildung* will never be receptive to the ideas of National Socialism."[123] These verdicts are reminiscent of the Italian prefascist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's 1909 response to the protagonists of Europe's high culture: "Destroy the museums, libraries and all the academies" and "Free this country of the tepid gangrene of its professors, archeologists, cicerones and antiquarians."[124]

During the period of the seizure of power, Nazis purposely used "revolutionary" antibourgeois rhetoric to undermine the position of their German National Peoples' Party ally and competitor, which was associated with the concept of *Bürgerlichkeit*. After the Reichstag Fire Decree, the elections of March 5, the Nazi takeover of the remaining German *Länder* (states) between March 5 and 12, and the Enabling Act of March 23, the political Left and the Center party were largely neutralized, so that, beginning in mid-March, attention became focused on the German Nationals as the NSDAP's main competitor. In addition to countless violent attacks, the struggle against the DNVP was carried out on economic and institutional levels, as the Nazis made a strenuous effort to call into question existing hierarchies.[125] Osnabrück's district court and Frankfurt's *Oberlandesgericht* (circuit court), for example, were two of several law courts in which a National Socialist complaint center was established; here low- and mid-echelon civil servants could lodge complaints against high-ranking civil servants, a good many of whom had close ties to the DNVP.[126] In pursuing a politics of resentment against their senior colleagues, the NSDAP sought to attract lower and mid-echelon officials to the party and used this kind of egalitarianism to undermine the position of their German National rival and coalition partner.

Another accusation often used to discredit the German National *Bürgertum* was its alleged "culture of corruption," especially embezzlement and misappropriation

[122] From "Nationalsozialistische Kulturpolitik," *Der Turnerschaftler* 50 (1933/34): 167, cited in Grüttner, *Studenten im Dritten Reich*, 249.

[123] From "Die Erziehung der Studentenschaft," in *Deutsche Studentenschaft*, no. 1 (October 9, 1933): 2–3, cited in Grüttner, *Studenten im Dritten Reich*, 249.

[124] Quoted in Sternhell, "Fascist Ideology," 315–78, esp. 341.

[125] BA Berlin Lichterfelde, Akten der Reichskanzlei, NSDAP, R 34 II, no. 1195, 211–35; BA Koblenz, Nachlaß Hugenberg, Ausschreitungen der NSDAP gegen DNVP Mitglieder, NL 1231, no. 89.

[126] BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, DNVP, Politischer Schriftwechsel, April 12, 1933, R 8005, no. 19, 6; Rainer Fattmann, *Bildungsbürger in der Defensive: Die akademische Beamtenschaft und der "Reichsbund der höheren Beamten" in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen, 2001).

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of funds.[127] These charges were an effective means to weaken the conservative bourgeoisie, given that its members occasionally engaged in special-interest politics, for it was not unusual to engineer mutually beneficial commissions and orders in their circles. The public sector played an important role in awarding orders for contracts and a certain degree of nepotism was not unusual. A telling case in point took place in the Pomeranian town of Köslin, where German Nationals were subjected to acrimonious Nazi attacks. At a Nazi rally for the local elections to be held on March 12, speakers bluntly declared that the (Imperial) "Black-White-Red" flag, with which the German Nationals were associated, should not be used as a "flag for a clique of special interests." Nazi Landtag deputy Hermann Czirniok, who had traveled from the provincial capital of Stettin for the purpose, fiercely attacked German Nationals with the charge that "the selfish special-interest politics of individual occupational groups" must finally be brought to an end, and he called for a clean sweep of the "upper orders." Czirniok further railed against the "corruption mentality" of the bourgeoisie and against the intertwining of political and business interests, of which the German Nationals had also been guilty. He juxtaposed the "corruption" and "special-interest politics" of the German Nationals with the positive concept of "serving the community and the whole of the nation" promulgated by the National Socialists.[128] The latter, who heretofore had only limited influence in local politics, could in this way offer themselves as an unspent, fresh, and uncorrupted force that would end bourgeois sleaze and corruption. This emphasis on corruption in bourgeois economic behavior was shared by French fascists, such as Georges Valois, who argued in the 1920s that the new bourgeoisie that had appeared after the war was corrupt: "For them everything can be bought. Public life is a marketplace where politicians, journalists, artists, and women are bought."[129]

VII

While National Socialist antibourgeois rhetoric gradually abated toward the end of the first phase of the *Machtergreifung* in the summer of 1933, a strong antibourgeois orientation persisted in everyday life. This was starkly reflected in the administration of justice and in the sentences passed down by German courts.

[127] BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, DNVP, Politischer Schriftwechsel, March 11, 1933, R 8005, no. 19, 148; Winterhager, *Günther Gereke*, 37–45.

[128] BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, DNVP, Politischer Schriftwechsel, March 11, 1933, R 8005, no. 19, 146–53.

[129] Quoted in Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The First Wave, 1924–1933* (New Haven, CT, 1986), 165.

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In the case of convictions under the so-called *Heimtücke-Verordnung*,[130] for example, defendants from bourgeois middle-class backgrounds (and especially German Jews) were usually punished more severely than those of the lower classes.[131] This was done not only to demonstrate the "egalitarian" quality of the *Volksgemeinschaft* but also out of the regime's justified concern that the public was more likely to accept as true reports spread by bourgeois defendants. In addition, members of the judiciary felt pressured to punish white-collar crime more heavily, especially since their legal verdicts and alleged "reactionary incompetence" began to come under severe criticism from the influential SS press organ *Das Schwarze Korps* from the mid-1930s onward.[132] The *Schwarze Korps* not only scrutinized verdicts for any instances of *Klassenjustiz*; it also vilified and denigrated the *bürgerliche* legal profession as a whole, so that judges were forewarned not to let bourgeois defendants off too lightly.[133] In the criminal justice system in general, the *Gesinnung* of the criminal—his political attitude, turn of mind, and supposed "character"—were given increasing weight, whereby the actual offense might well hold less importance for sentencing. In these circumstances, a bourgeois defendant, assumed to be hostile toward the regime, could hardly count on clemency.[134]

Already during the republic it had been accepted that certain undetermined normative concepts of law (guiding principles) and the *Generalklauseln* of the Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Recht*),[135] which were central to Roman law, need not be written in stone but were "subject to revision," thus giving judges a certain discretionary leeway.[136] In the course of the Third Reich, these "general clauses"

[130] *Ursachen und Folgen: Das Dritte Reich; die Zertrümmerung des Parteienstaates und die Grundlegung der Diktatur*, vol. 9 (Berlin, n.d.), 281.

[131] "Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zur Abwehr heimtückischer Angriffe gegen die Regierung der nationalen Erhebung," of March 21, 1933, according to which "untrue assertions," the dissemination of which were likely to lessen the reputation of the Reich government, were punished by prison sentences. For details of sentences, see Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, Bestand 507, Sondergericht Mannheim; Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Wiesbaden, Abt. 461, Sondergericht Frankfurt.

[132] Since its inception in March 1935, *Das Schwarze Korps* (circulation in 1944: 750,000) presented itself as the advocate of a "true, pure National Socialism" and set ideological standards. See Wolfgang Benz, Hermann Graml, and Hermann Weiß, eds., *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich, 1997), 722.

[133] Lothar Gruchmann, *Justiz im Dritten Reich 1933–1940*, 3rd ed. (Munich, 2001), 663–70.

[134] Ibid., 822–925; Ernst Ritter, "Justiz und innere Verwaltung," in Benz, Graml, and Weiß, *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*, 85–98, esp. 93.

[135] General clauses were legal provisions that established general legal principles, whereby general interpretations were left to the discretion of the judge.

[136] Gruchmann, *Justiz im Dritten Reich*, 731–32, 889–93, 916–26.

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were increasingly monopolized by National Socialist values, which gradually eroded the hitherto prevailing interpretation of the civil code.[137] This development ran counter to the interests of the *Bürgertum*, as bourgeois normative standards in public life and the economy were increasingly undermined. Legal transactions that "offended the 'gesunde Volksempfinden' [sound popular instinct] and the 'welfare of the *Volksgemeinschaft*'" were soon declared null and void.[138]

After 1933, the concept of property was redefined from the vantage point of National Socialist communal ideology. Property now had a social commitment to the community attached to it. This in turn led to drastic restrictions on the rights of property-owning individuals.[139] Property was now considered "an endowment and responsibility of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to its individual members."[140] A cornerstone of bourgeois identity—private property that could be bought and sold at will—had thus become obsolete. The new dogma mandated that property was tied to the obligation of its owner toward the community. This meant that legal ownership was guaranteed only as long as the owner did not violate his commitment to the community.[141] In a similar vein, other legal notions such as *Vertragsfreiheit* (contractual freedom), which were crucial to the self-image of the *Bürger*, were also ground down: a contract could be valid only if it remained within the confines of the "communal order" and fit in neatly with *völkisch* strictures.[142] Finally, the notion of matrimony, an integral part of bourgeois private and public life, was equally deprived of its former meaning. The new legal concept of the nation as a racially based *völkisch* community altered the foundation of law to the point that marriage was now viewed primarily as "a source for the preservation and promotion of the *Volkstum*."[143] Marriage thus ceased to be "a private affair of those concerned; it becomes a responsibility in the service of the preservation of the racial and cultural forces of the people."[144] Like so much else, marriage was stripped of its private characteristics and used to further the ideological goals of National Socialism. In the realm of law, antibourgeois rhetoric was buttressed by antibourgeois actions.

[137] This is demonstrated in admirable detail by Bernd Rüthers in his classic study on the development of civil law in the Third Reich, *Die unbegrenzte Auslegung: Zum Wandel der Privatrechtsordung im Nationalsozialismus*, 7th ed. (1968; Tübingen, 2012), esp. 111–36, 144–82, 216–69, 351–430.

[138] Ibid., 218.

[139] Ibid., 351–52.

[140] Ibid., 353. In this context, National Socialist jurists spoke of the "soziale Pflichtgebundenheit des Eigentums."

[141] Ibid., 356.

[142] Ibid., 360–66.

[143] Ibid., 400–403, esp. 401.

[144] Hans Frank, ed., *Nationalsozialistisches Handbuch für Recht und Gesetzgebung*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1935), 955.

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Though its antibourgeois rhetoric began to drop off after the summer of 1933, the regime's values and policies were implicitly and explicitly aimed at reducing bourgeois influence. Daily life in the Third Reich and the development of society between 1933 and 1939 clearly illustrate that National Socialists set out to undermine the traditions, customs, and way of life of the *Wirtschafts-* and *Bildungsbürgertum*. As a result, the *Bürgertum* began steadily to lose ground as the standard-bearer of the nation's aspirations. Due to the widespread anti-intellectualism of National Socialism, the formerly highly valued *bürgerliche Akademiker* lost much of their standing and social prestige.[145] During the peacetime years before 1939, the number of students at universities and *Technische Hochschulen* (technical colleges) fell from 138,000 in 1931 to about 63,000 in 1939.[146] In the classical courses of study of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, jurisprudence and humanities, the decline was especially precipitate.[147] The sharp drop in numbers was due in part to the relentless campaign of criticism by leading members of the National Socialist regime and the public opinion generated by its rhetoric that was leveled at the government bureaucracy (whose higher service was made up largely of jurists), secondary-school teachers, and intellectuals. Fritz-Dietlof Graf von Schulenburg, a high-ranking official who later made a name for himself as a member of the resistance against Hitler, wrote in a memorandum in 1937 that "the honor of the civil service class is no longer protected" and that, as a consequence, officials increasingly felt "disquieted, maligned, deprived of their honor, at times even desperate."[148] Hitler's speech to the press corps on November 10, 1938, in which he wrote off members of the intelligentsia as useless, unreliable, and dangerous, aimed at, among others,

[145] Members of the legal profession, high-echelon civil servants, *Gymnasiallehrer*, and university professors generally counted for less, whereas medical doctors experienced a boost in social esteem (and income). The increasing importance of the medical profession was partly due to the rise of eugenics (*Rassenhygiene*) and the much-advertised struggle against hereditary diseases (*Erbgesundheit*). In addition, professionals and civil servants lost their professional autonomy when organizations of civil servants and the various professions were "coordinated" with existing Nazi organizations in the spring of 1933. See Konrad Jarausch, *The Unfree Professions: German Lawyers, Teachers, and Engineers, 1900–1950* (New York, 1990), 142–61, and "Die Krise des deutschen Bildungsbürgertums im ersten Drittel des 20. Jahrhunderts," in Kocka, *Politischer Einfluß und gesellschaftliche Formation*, 180–206; Michael Kater, *Doctors under Hitler* (New York, 1989), and "Medizin und Mediziner im Dritten Reich," *Historische Zeitschrift* 244 (1987): 299–352.

[146] Grüttner, *Studenten im Dritten Reich*, 487. Numbers of students at universities dropped from 104,000 to 41,000; those at the Technischen Hochschulen from roughly 22,000 to 12,000.

[147] Ibid., 490.

[148] The memorandum is reprinted in Hans Mommsen, *Beamtentum im Dritten Reich* (Stuttgart, 1966), 146–48, esp. 147. See also Ulrich Heinemann, *Ein konservativer Rebell: Fritz-Dietlof Graf von der Schulenburg und der 20. Juli* (Berlin, 1990), 35–66.

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jurists and professors, is a prominent instance of the regime's vociferous anti-intellectualism.[149]

In addition, a significant number of the regime's social policies and newly created organizations were designed to level class barriers. That these measures were directed explicitly at the *Bürgertum* was apparent from the frequent references to "bourgeois conceit" and "presumption." Two examples may suffice to illustrate this point: Already in 1933, students in their first four semesters were compelled to attend a labor service camp (*Arbeitsdienstlager*) for ten weeks, while in 1934 a mandatory six-month *Arbeitsdienstpflicht* (labor service duty) was introduced for all graduating Gymnasium students who wished to attend university.[150] It was a key goal of the *Arbeitsdienst* to tear down social barriers between members of the working class, journeymen, and farmers, on the one hand, and future members of professional classes and high officials, on the other.[151] To ensure that academic conceit and snobbery would be extinguished effectively, the percentage of students assigned to a labor service camp was limited to about one quarter to make sure that they remained in a minority. As the future *Arbeitsdienstführer* (Reich labor service leader) Konstantin Hierl proclaimed in 1933: "There is no better means to overcome social cleavages, class hatred, and class conceit than to have the son of a factory owner and a young laborer, a young intellectual and a farmhand serve their common people and fatherland side by side, wearing the same garb and consuming the same fare."[152] The reality of life in the labor service camps was often shaped by resentful superiors, who were bent on demonstrating to the children of the *Bürgertum* that they were no better than others, which only alienated them and thus contributed little to bringing social classes more closely together.[153] Whatever the effective outcome, the political intention behind labor service had an unmistakable anti-bourgeois edge.

"Strength through Joy" (*Kraft durch Freude*, or *KdF*), that vast National Socialist leisure-time organization with its tens of millions of participants, did its

[149] Wilhelm Treue, "Rede Hitlers vor der deutschen Presse (10. November 1938)," *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 6 (1958): 175–91; Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen*, 1:973–74.

[150] Grüttner, *Studenten im Dritten Reich*, 227–237; Geoffrey Giles, *Students and National Socialism in Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 1985).

[151] Helping to build a *Volksgemeinschaft* was another goal; Hans-Ulrich Thamer, "Nation als Volksgemeinschaft: Völkische Vorstellungen, Nationalsozialismus und Gemeinschaftsideologie," in *Soziales Denken in Deutschland zwischen Tradition und Innovation*, ed. Jörg-Dieter Gauger and Klaus Weigelt (Bonn, 1990), 112–27.

[152] Quoted in Grüttner, *Studenten im Dritten Reich*, 227.

[153] Hoimar von Ditfurth, *Innenansichten eines Artgenossen* (Düsseldorf, 1989), 135; Grüttner, *Studenten im Dritten Reich*, 230–32; Otto Roegele, "Student im Dritten Reich," in *Die Deutsche Universität im Dritten Reich: Eine Vortragsreihe der Universität München* (Munich, 1966), 135–74, esp. 155.

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utmost to raze class barriers outside the workplace.[154] "Strength through Joy" included a comprehensive cultural and tourist program among its offerings, ranging from opera, concert, and theater performances to day, weekend, and longer holiday trips in Germany and abroad. Plays and operas, once attended mostly by the educated *Bürgertum*, were now made available to everyone at reduced prizes. The organization's ocean liners, unlike traditional cruise ships, eliminated different cabin classes and offered only single-class passenger berths.[155] Since throwing passengers of different classes together did not mean that they would willingly mingle, intentions often fell short of their desired effect. Still, "Strength through Joy" demonstrated the regime's determination to erase social classes and demolish the exalted position of the *Bürgertum* in people's minds.[156] Equality of status, if not of wealth, property, and income, was thus consistently promulgated by the policies of the regime, even as outright antibourgeois rhetoric subsided between the summer of 1933 and the last phase of the war.[157]

VIII

Antibourgeois orientations were just as prominent in other European fascist movements, though what lay at their root, as well as their function, varies from country to country. In the Italian and French cases, Juan Linz observed that "the emphasis on style, on symbolic expression, allowed fascism to challenge the bourgeois style of life and bourgeois conventions, without threatening its immediate economic interests," while in eastern Europe, where the worldliness of the bourgeoisie was often compared to the rootedness of "the people," "the strong antibourgeois character of some fascist movements is linked with the cosmopolitan orientation of the national bourgeoisie, its cultural dependency on foreign centers setting their life style."[158] George Mosse commented that opposition to the bourgeoisie seemed common to socialism and fascism, since both vilified the moribund bourgeois age: they differed in that "fascism cut away the class basis of socialist opposition to the bourgeoisie and substituted the war between generations. 'Bourgeois' no longer meant a class of exploiters, but the old and worn

[154] Shelley Baranowski, *Strength through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 2007); Hermann Weiß, "Ideologie der Freizeit im Dritten Reich: Die NS-Gemeinschaft 'Kraft durch Freude,'" *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 33 (1993): 289–303.

[155] Baranowski, *Strength through Joy*, 51–66, 142–54; Michael Schneider, *Unterm Hakenkreuz: Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung 1933 bis 1939* (Bonn, 1999), 226–38.

[156] Baranowski, *Strength through Joy*, 166–75; Schneider, *Unterm Hakenkreuz*, 671–83.

[157] No major reform of the tax system or other fiscal measures were undertaken or even considered to even out differences in wealth and income.

[158] Juan J. Linz, "Some Notes toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective," in Laqueur, *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, 3–125, esp. 20.

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out, those who lacked a vibrant dynamic."[159] And, in the case of Italy, Mosse emphasized that antibourgeois rhetoric was part of the resentment fascist leaders from more modest social backgrounds felt against so-called established society.[160] In Italy, antibourgeois resentments were also used to legitimize Mussolini's regime. Franklin Adler, for example, emphasized that when, in 1937, intelligence reports submitted to the Ministry of Internal Affairs indicated growing dissatisfaction with fascism, Mussolini launched the so-called anti-Borghese campaign, which was coupled with "a frontal attack against the Jews—the principal bearers, in Mussolini's words, of the 'bourgeois spirit.'"[161] In a speech delivered in October 1938, Mussolini claimed that "the enemy of our regime has a name, '*borghesia*,'" which is "pessimistic, self-interested, and parasitic." The bourgeois spirit is considered an obstacle to further development: "It must be isolated and destroyed." Adler stressed that once the "bourgeois spirit" became identified with "the Jewish spirit," attacks against the bourgeoisie turned into attacks against Jews, who were portrayed as bound to the "old, decadent order, as well as the corrupting bourgeois spirit that informed it."[162]

Values such as willingness to sacrifice, stern fulfillment of one's duties, and heroism were held in high regard in Italian and French fascist movements, while enjoyment of life's comforts was deprecated, as illustrated in Mussolini's famous "Noi disprezziamo la vita comoda." And in France the "bourgeois decay" of the 1930s, the "spirit of facility," and "the cult of ease" were blamed for the defeat of 1940.[163] As Zeev Sternhell argues, fascism denied the equation "well-being = happiness." Rather, fascism "meant 'living dangerously'"—it was, in Oswald Mosley's phrase, "a great and hazardous adventure"[164]—and was, especially in its French variants, "a rebellion against bourgeois society, its moral values, its political and social structures, its way of life."[165] Sternhell's explanation of the antibourgeois character of French fascism clearly applies to the German case as well: "In addition to a political revolution, fascism sought to bring about a moral

[159] Mosse, "Toward a General Theory of Fascism," 1–44, esp. 26–27, 30–31.

[160] Ibid., 26–27, 30–31.

[161] Franklin Hugh Adler, "Jew as Bourgeois, Jew as Enemy, Jew as Victim of Fascism," *Modern Judaism* 28, no. 3 (2008): 306–26, esp. 314.

[162] Ibid., 315–16. In a similar argument, Mosse (*Crisis*, 309–10) argues that the Nazi revolution was "anti-bourgeois insofar as it was directed against the Jew."

[163] Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944* (New York, 1972), 21–22.

[164] Sternhell, "Fascist Ideology," 315–78, esp. 338, 340.

[165] Quoted in Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left*, 2. "A movement of revolt, fascism drew its dynamism from its 'disruptive power,' its total rejection of bourgeois society with its political and social structures and values"; fascists "offered a brand of neo-idealism that put the spiritual above the material"; see Sternhell, "Fascist Ideology," esp. 337, 339.

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revolution, a profound transformation of the human spirit. Not only the fate of the nation was at issue, but also the destiny of civilization: [fascism] . . . was animated by a desire to create a new type of man, characterized by the classically antibourgeois virtues of heroism, energy, alertness, a sense of duty, a willingness to sacrifice, and an acceptance of the idea of preeminence of the community over the individuals who compose it."[166]

In Germany and France, intense nationalism undoubtedly constituted an important source of antibourgeois thought. Nazis condemned the weak and emasculated bourgeoisie, and French fascist intellectuals fought democracy, capitalism, and the bourgeoisie because they regarded them "as aspects of the 'materialist' sickness eating away at French society."[167] In both cases the existence of the bourgeoisie was considered to have lessened the strength of the nation. In the German case, the anti-*bürgerlich* orientation of National Socialism should be accorded greater weight in order to appreciate more fully the overall character and popularity of the movement. Antibourgeois proclamations contained an implicit social revolutionary component, so that the Nazis' anti-*bürgerlich* propaganda made the NSDAP more acceptable to the working classes, in particular since the socialists also mouthed anti-*bürgerlich* slogans. The National Socialists' pronounced criticism of formal education, *Bildungsdünkel* (intellectual snobbery), and the class barriers that became ossified through the educational system exerted a tantalizing attraction on the lower and lower middle classes in the classic country of "status formalization,"[168] all the more so since this criticism appeared to be entirely justified. Its effect on voters from these echelons of society, though it cannot be gauged with complete accuracy, was considerable.[169] Numerous examples from the life experiences of enthusiastic supporters of the NSDAP that appear in the Abel Collection make it clear that a major appeal of the Nazi movement lay in its social dynamics.[170] Many Germans supported

[166] Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left*, 270–71. For the best general definition of fascism, see Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison, WI, 1980), 3–21, and *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (Madison, WI, 1995), 3–23.

[167] Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left*, xiii; Payne, *History of Fascism*, 8.

[168] In his seminal *Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland* (Munich, 1968), Ralf Dahrendorf referred to Germany as the classic country of "*Statusformalisierung*," though one should point out that when arguing that the Nazi regime had to effect a "social revolution" in order to establish totalitarian rule, Dahrendorf refers to the "Herauslösung des Individuums aus den traditionellen Bindungen von Familie, Klasse, Region, und Religion" (426).

[169] See, e.g., Childers, *The Nazi Voter*.

[170] Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came into Power*, with a new preface by Thomas Childers (Cambridge, MA, 1986). Childers stresses the unexpected frankness and unintentionally revealing content of the life histories.

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Hitler because they felt discriminated against in Germany's hierarchically ordered society, in which they had learned from bitter personal experience that privileged birth rather than achievement was decisive for social and professional advancement. The egalitarian rhetoric of National Socialists appealed to them and drew them into the movement. In Abel's biographical accounts, readers encounter innumerable "frustrated career ambitions" due to seemingly unbridgeable social barriers.[171]

The fact that the "bourgeoisie"—what Germans considered the *Großbürgertum*—was disparaged, and thereby relegated to the periphery of the new state, could not fail to make the Nazis more attractive to the socially less fortunate masses, and the incessant social egalitarian discourse, even if it was instrumental, opened up the appealing prospect of social and political advancement. Social mobility would become reality for the hundreds of thousands of small *Amtswalter*—NSDAP functionaries who held positions in the party hierarchy and its affiliated organizations (the National-Sozialistische Volkswohlfahrt [NSV], the "National Socialist People's Welfare," alone had 11 million members) and who profited after the Nazis came to power. Even if their positions were unpaid, the status they were accorded already amounted to a rise in social standing. With respect to the social reality of Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1939, David Schoenbaum was correct in arguing that the Nazis succeeded in creating a socially more permeable society by decoupling class from social status.[172] The promise to make society open to talent had a subjectively tangible effect, for it convinced a substantial part of the population that differences between high and low had become blurred and that they lived in a more socially egalitarian state. While social reality in statistically measurable terms had not significantly changed, it was important that social snobbery was disparaged and that the regime gave the impression of working to break down class barriers.[173] Regarding the extent of social mobility, Thomas Saunders has argued that "the combination of political or racial dis-

[171] Peter H. Merkl, *Political Violence under the Swastika: 581 Early Nazis* (Princeton, NJ, 1975), esp. 44–48, 62–77, 616–19. Merkl used Abel's life histories as his primary source.

[172] David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933–1939* (Garden City, NY, 1980). "Interpreted social reality," Schoenbaum argued, "reflected a society united like no other in recent German history, a society of opportunities for young and old, classes and masses, a society that was New Deal and good old days at the same time" (286).

[173] Hans Mommsen, "Nachwort," in David Schoenbaum, *Die braune Revolution: Eine Sozialgeschichte des Dritten Reiches* (Munich, 1980), 352–86, esp. 357–58. The former Nazis interviewed by Milton Mayer also emphasized that "National Socialism broke down that separation, that class distinction"; see Milton Mayer, *They Thought They Were Free* (Chicago, 1955), 104–5.

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crimination and the growth of the bureaucracy created opportunities for social advancement"[174] and that the emotive appeal of breaking down class antagonism must have been great. It comes as no surprise that, as William Jannen has shown, Nazis made a "sustained and conscious effort" to free social advancement from academic fetters and that Nazi mayors, Kreisleiter, and Gauleiter were less qualified than the criteria for leadership posts before 1933 (or after 1949) would have required. Young men in their twenties had "higher rates of upward mobility than older generations ever enjoyed," and high-ranking members of the Nazi bureaucracy were on average ten years younger and their educational qualifications and social origins lower than those of comparable officials in the Weimar or postwar Bonn republics.[175]

The antibourgeois thrust of National Socialism was the key element in Nazi egalitarian discourse until the summer of 1933. It was occasionally used to discredit the ruling elite, especially in the winter and spring of 1933, but it was more than a tactical device. Nazi resentment toward the *Bürgertum* was entirely genuine, and the charges were numerous. *Bürger* had no social conscience. By dint of their arrogant behavior they had turned the working classes against the nation and were responsible for driving the proletariat into the Marxist camp, which was more receptive to its demands. During the revolutionary showdown in 1918, the *Bürgertum* had shown itself weak, ineffective, irresolute, devoid of any principled programmatic goals, and thus wholly incapable of confronting the leftist revolutionaries. The half-heartedness, indecision, and lack of fighting spirit of the *Bürger* were explained by their lack of "character," obsession with material possessions, outdated forms of behavior, and the "hollow claptrap of *Bildung*," which they used as a means of preserving their elevated social rank. As succinctly put in the Nazi era's most popular encyclopedia: "National Socialism turned against the *Bürgertum* because its intellectual and spiritual development led to decay and decomposition, threatening the foundation of the nation [*Volkstum*]."[176]

[174] Thomas Saunders, "Nazism and Social Revolution," in *Modern Germany Reconsidered, 1870–1945*, ed. Gordon Martel (London, 1992), 159–77, esp. 168. Saunders also maintains that Ian Kershaw (*The Nazi Dictatorship*, 2nd ed. [London, 1989], 143–44) and Jeremy Noakes ("Nazism and Revolution," in *Revolutionary Theory and Political Reality*, ed. Noel O'Sullivan [Brighton, 1983], 73–100) minimize the role of increased social opportunity.

[175] William Jannen Jr., "National Socialism and Social Mobility," *Journal of Social History* 9 (1976): 339–67, esp. 340, 345. As Jannen emphasizes, it was the lower-ranking *Volksschullehrer* who dominated the National Socialist Teacher's Association and thus controlled the careers of Gymnasium teachers (350).

[176] "Bürgertum," in *Der Neue Brockhaus*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1938), 1:417. Bourgeois parties had been dissolved since "they had proved themselves socially and politically incapable of renewing the Reich and winning over the masses of the people."

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Why then did millions who considered themselves *bürgerlich* vote NSDAP in the elections of 1930 and 1932? Undoubtedly, many will not have taken Nazi attacks at face value and will have dismissed Nazism's antibourgeois attacks as political rhetoric. More significantly, Nazi criticism appears to have resonated with other members of the *Bürgertum* who concurred that the *Bürgertum* had indeed failed abysmally in November 1918. In a Germany wrecked by the fallout of the lost war, the total inflation of 1923, and the present Great Depression, they were inclined to agree that the *Bürgertum*'s day was over, its values now meaningless anachronisms.[177] These sentiments were likely deepened by the contempt and loathing many members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* harbored for the Weimar Republic.[178] A significant number of *Bürger* thus had lost faith in their own bourgeois identity, for which there seemed no place in the political reality of the republic. Widespread and deeply felt calls to strengthen the nation prevailed over the *Bürgertum*'s status consciousness, especially since the vision of a strong national community enjoyed almost universal appeal.[179] Here Nazi identity politics geared toward reformulating the concept of the nation bore significant fruit: not only did the National Socialist movement turn the population against long-established bourgeois values; it also compelled members of the *Bürgertum* to call into question their own identity, thus weakening *bürgerlich* values from within.

The positive foil to the failure of the bourgeois world was a society without barriers of status and rank, in which private life would disappear and material wealth would be disparaged. *Bürger* would survive only as *citoyens* and would become purely public beings, ceaselessly professing their loyalty to the regime. In a process of hitherto unprecedented political mobilization, all individuals would become one with the regime. National Socialism preferred the *Arbeiter* to the *Bürger* since the politicized worker epitomized the nation's strength, whereas the private *Bürger*, cultivating his *Innerlichkeit*, embodied its weakness. To safeguard the revolutionary changes under way and to overcome class divisions, the Nazis had to create a new type of human being imbued with new values. This New Man of National Socialism would be devoid of "class conceit," one with his people, and not separated by barriers based on formal learning and diplomas. He would respect "character," be pervaded by a sense of honor, reject personal advantages, and be honest and strictly incorruptible in his behavior. He would be the

[177] Hans Mommsen, "Die Auflösung des Bürgertums seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert," in Kocka, *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit*, 288–315.

[178] Heinrich-August Winkler, *Weimar, 1918–1933*, 4th ed. (Munich, 1995), 293–94.

[179] The concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* as counterfoil to a modern society that was marked by political and social conflicts transcended party politics and, since 1914, exerted a powerful fascination for liberals, conservatives, and members of Christian parties.

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counterimage of the property-owning bourgeois, rejecting bourgeois comforts, materialism, and well-being and imbued with a strong sense of duty and a willingness to sacrifice everything on the altar of the nation.[180] This new human type would be fit for the struggles of the future and able to reclaim Germany's rightful place in the world.[181]

[180] Sternhell's argument that fascism, in this case National Socialism, considered itself a moral revolution and a profound transformation of the human spirit is verified nowhere more clearly than here; see Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left*, 270.

[181] One may wonder whether it was this tantalizing prospect that made so many *Bürger* not only put up with offensive and ceaseless Nazi criticism but also, beginning in the spring of 1932, first vote for the NSDAP in increasing numbers and then flock into its organizations in the winter and spring of 1933. In addition to Hamilton, *Who Voted for Hitler*, see also Jane Caplan, "Civil Service Support for National Socialism: An Evaluation," and Gunnar C. Boehnert, "The Jurists in the SS-Führerkorps, 1925–1939," both in *Der Führerstaat: Mythos und Realität*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld and Lother Kettenacker (Stuttgart, 1981), 167–93 and 361–74, respectively; and Georg Bollenbeck, "German Kultur, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, and Its Susceptibility to National Socialism," *German Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (2000): 67–83.

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